

NOTE: These minutes do not constitute a verbatim transcription of the CPC meeting.

**CITY PLANNING COMMISSION
SPECIAL MEETING
March 10, 2005**

APPROVED

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Arthur Simons in the Committee of the Whole Room, 13th Floor of the Coleman A. Young Municipal Center, at 4:30 PM.

Roll Call: Present at the meeting were Commissioners Glaser, Glenn, Jeffrey, Simons, Wendler and Williams. Absent were Commissioners Cason (excused), Christensen (excused) and Smith (excused).

Agenda: The Agenda was approved as submitted.

OLD BUS.— Request of Landmark Healthcare Facilities to modify a PD in area of 7733 E. Jefferson; rezone area of E. Lafayette, Sheridan, Congress and Field from R5 to PD to allow for a medical office building & parking: Further consideration was given to the request of Landmark Healthcare Facilities to modify the plans for the existing PD (Planned Development District) zoning classification for property located at 7733 E. Jefferson Ave. (St. John Detroit Riverview Hospital) to construct a new medical office building and to rezone property generally bounded by E. Lafayette Ave., vacated Sheridan Ave., Congress St., and the alley first east of Field Ave. from R5 (Medium Density Residential District) to PD (Planned Development District) in order to expand the existing parking area for the Hospital.

CPC staff member Heidi Alcock reviewed the background information and responded to concerns raised at the Commission's March 3, 2005 meeting. Concerns and issues included the condition of the alley first north of E. Jefferson between Seyburn and Van Dyke Ave., the intrusion of hospital-related traffic into the alley and into the neighborhood, and the need to secure commitments from the Department of Works (DPW) - Traffic Engineering Division prior to the Commission taking action on the proposed expansion.

CPC staff provided copies of correspondence from the DPW Traffic Engineering Division in response to the City Planning Commission's request at the March 3, 2005 meeting and e-mail from staff to the DPW Director and Traffic Engineering staff summarizing items agreed to at a meeting on March 9, 2005. At that meeting, DPW agreed that the alley is in poor condition; patching would not be an adequate solution. A curb cut in the median on Jefferson Ave. at Field Street to provide another option besides East Grand Blvd. and Van Dyke Ave. for north-south traffic through the neighborhood or the addition of a turn-around lane on Jefferson are not possible because of the lack of time to traffic to merge safely.

Ms. Alcock noted that a few residents expressed concern about converting the alley one-way headed east to Van Dyke because they wanted the option to use Seyburn. The DPW recommended the posting of a "Do Not Enter Sign" at the entrance of the alley at Van Dyke Ave. provided that all of the adjacent property owners concur. The adjacent property owners support the recommendation.

Commissioner Glenn expressed concern regarding the potential for parking in the alley and suggested "no parking" signs be posted in the alley to keep vehicles from parking in the alley. CPC staff indicated that they would follow up with Commissioner Glenn's suggestion.

CPC staff recommended approval of the request providing that the Department of Public Works (DPW) Traffic Engineering Division install a "No left turn" sign at the Van Dyke Ave. exit from the alley first north of E. Jefferson between Seyburn and Van Dyke Ave to prevent left turns onto Van Dyke Ave.; that a "Do not enter" sign be installed at the Van Dyke Ave. entrance to the alley first north of E. Jefferson between Seyburn and Van Dyke Ave., provided that all of the adjacent property owners concur as required by the DPW Traffic Engineering Division; that the alley first north of Jefferson between Seyburn and Van Dyke Ave. be physically improved (i.e., more than patching) at the expense of the developer; that the final site plans include an additional 1,500 to 2,000 square feet in green space and landscaping in order to visually break up the expanded parking lot; that the final site plans designate a pedestrian pathway through the parking lot with appropriate lighting and signage; and that the final site plan, elevations and landscaping plan be submitted to CPC staff for review and approval prior to the issuance of applicable building permits.

CPC staff noted that the hospital has agreed to the amended conditions.

Upon questioning, CPC staff expressed confidence that the conditions of the recommendation would be met by both the hospital and DPW.

ACTION: Commissioner Glenn moved to accept the CPC staff recommendation. Commissioner Glaser seconded the motion. Motion carried.

The West Village Association provided copies of a letter via fax in support of CPC staff's recommendation and copies of the near final draft of the new Memorandum of Understanding between the hospital and the community regarding the development of the pocket park originally planned in 1999.

Director's
Report:

Ms. Bruhn presented the Director's Report.

Recent City Council actions included overriding the Mayor's veto of the City's Capital Agenda 2005-06 through 2009-10.

In response to a question of Commissioner Glenn, Medina Noor of the Department of Administrative Hearings (DAH) has indicated that the Department does not have the capability to break down blight violations by zip code.

Ms. Bruhn noted that she has spoken with Ms. Noor about publicizing information on the DAH at Commission meetings and preparing other materials for distribution. Ms. Noor indicated that the Cable Commission is preparing a video on the DAH and the new procedures. CPC staff intends to keep working on this as time permits. Commissioner Williams felt that the DAH should have the capability to break down building code violations by zip code since the address would appear on the ticket. A new data field could easily be added to a database so that building code violations could be sorted via zip code.

Sorting information by zip code could provide valuable information. It would be of interest not only to the CPC but to other City agencies to know where blight has increased considerably, and for other research purposes. He recommended asking the DAH to consider including a zip code field in its database.

Ms. Bruhn noted that according to the March 4, 2005 issue of the "Housing Affairs Letter," both houses of Congress have taken action to head off the proposal by the Bush administration's Office of Management and Budget "to dismantle and revamp" the Community Development Block Grant program. According to the article, "CDBG Center of Congress' Attention," 55 Senators have signed a letter "asking the Senate Budget Committee to reject the proposal and fund CDBG fully in its present home at HUD."

The Bush Administration is proposing to cut the CDBG program by 90%, shift it to the Commerce Department and modify the program to refocus on economic development.

Members of the House and Senate have received complaints from across the country from governors, mayors and other elected officials in opposition to the proposed changes. Organizations such as the U.S. Conference of Mayors, National League of Cities, National Community Development Association, and the Local Initiatives Support Corporation have endorsed the letter, calling it "the lifeblood of community development and revitalization". It is unlikely that a bill would be considered this year.

Commissioners commented on the tour of the DAH held on March 8, 2005. Commissioner Simons noted that judges were dismissing cases because the inspectors who issued the tickets were not present at the hearings. He inquired as to what happens to those cases.

Commissioner Wendler inquired as to whether the inspector who has issued the ticket has to be present at the hearing. Could another inspector be present instead?

Commissioner Jeffrey felt that the purpose of the DAH would be defeated if violations are dismissed because an inspector was not present at the hearing. He questioned why an inspector had to be present at the hearing. In other situations, police officers who issue tickets are able to turn the violations over to the Prosecutor's Office for further action. The police officers are not required to appear in court. The DAH has a picture of the photo depicting violations. The DAH should be able to designate a person to present the cases at the hearings. He suggested a system similar to that followed by B&SE and City Council relative to dangerous buildings hearings. B&SE inspectors who inspect those buildings do not attend the hearings before City Council.

In response to Commissioner Simons, Ms. Bruhn noted that violators are given an initial warning prior to the issuance of a ticket. She will follow up with Ms. Noor on the questions asked at the meeting.

Adj.:

The meeting was adjourned at 4:55 PM.